

**EDUCATION, CHILDREN & FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**17<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

**ORAL QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Oral Questions to the Chairman of Education, Children and Families Select Committee received from Mr Julian Grainger**

1) 'Noting that St Olave's has a new Chairman of Governors, and given the increasing number and seriousness of concerns about the top management of St Olave's, including:

- i) Disregard for laws and regulations around students and governance
- ii) Reports of threats and intimidation towards staff, students and parents
- iii) Interference with Governing Body elections by the Head
- iv) Governor Terms of Office extended contrary to Regulations
- v) Interference by the Head in the structure and management of the independent, charitable Parents Association contrary to its Constitution,

and noting that Oxford County Council appeared to have both investigated and proposed an Interim Executive Board on less concrete evidence than is available for St Olave's, would the Chairman support calls for an investigation (perhaps by a Working Party) into St Olave's using powers under:

- a) The Education Act 2005, section 51 (*where a local education authority require information about any matter ...*);
- b) The Education and Inspections Act 2006, section 60(1)(e), section 63-66 (*intervention for breakdown in governance and/or management or safety of staff, students*)

or

- c) any other powers at the Council's disposal,

in order to assist the new Chairman of Governors in establishing an atmosphere of transparency and accountability in which all stakeholders (students, parents and staff) can have confidence?'

***Reply:***

*The Local Authority has written to the new Chairman of the Governing Body about a number of issues that have been raised in respect of St. Olave's. As there will be further developments, it would not be right for me to elaborate further on these matters at this time.*

***Supplementary question:***

*The achievements of students and teachers should make St. Olave's the jewel in the crown but given the disregard for several Regulations, intimidation of*

*staff and students, lack of proper Governance and interference with Governing Body elections of which a Select Committee Member has direct, personal knowledge, will the Portfolio Holder / Education Chairman undertake:*

*Firstly, to review the following laws which appear to give the Council the powers to investigate, namely Education Act 2005 Section 51 which states quite plainly at clauses 1 (a) and (b) that an Education Authority “may cause an inspection of the school to be made” by one or more of their officers for the purpose of obtaining the information if it “requires information about any matter”, and Education Inspections Act 2006 section 60(2) which allows an Education Authority to give a warning notice if 2 (b) “there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed”, or 2 (c) “that the safety of pupils or staff of the school is threatened”, and be aware of sections 63 to 66 which give an Education Authority many different powers but including at section 64 the power to appoint additional Local Authority Governors.*

*Secondly, to review the application by Oxford County Council for an Interim Executive Board, which appears to be based on less solid evidence of poor governance and wrongdoing than that at St Olave’s, and having done so, if still minded not to investigate, be kind enough to write to the Questioners explaining why not?*

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

2) Mental Health consequences of pushing students too hard

Noting that the Select Committee will be considering an item on Mental Health, what does the Chairman believe to be the potential impacts on young people from experiencing some or all :

- i) being excluded permanently from school at the end of year 12 for one D grade while getting an A and B in other subjects?
- ii) having to spend 2 or 3 weeks at the end of August trying to find another school or college
- iii) being barred from taking an exam because a mock was a C grade
- iv) being forced to leave after GCSE because one grade out of 9 was a C meaning that 8 subjects must be A\*
- v) in the case of both Y11 and Year 12 exclusions apparently no help to find a new school or college
- vi) being told every week by senior teachers of the absolute necessity to achieve in all subjects

and will the Select Committee consider scrutinising St Olaves to understand the motives for such harsh policies and practices - and who actually benefits?

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

**Supplementary question:**

*Noting the old Head was “incandescent” at learning how his legacy of academic excellence combined with pastoral care had been trashed, and that making teachers act as “bad cop” on a weekly basis risks mental breakdowns amongst staff and students, does the Chairman agree that the Select Committee, when reviewing both permanent exclusions and mental health of young people, could review the practices at St Olave’s and other schools?*

*Does the Chairman also agree that the Education Act 2005, section 51 could be used to make relevant enquiries and that the Education Inspections Act 2006 to instigate a School and/or Governance Review could also be used and, if warranted, that any of several powers granted to the Local Authority under sections 63 to 66 - including appointing additional Local Authority Governors – could be used?*

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

**Oral Question to the Chairman of Education, Children and Families Select Committee received from Ms Sarah McAleer**

- 1) Regarding St Olave’s Barring Of Nominee for Local Authority Governor and noting that Minutes of St Olave’s Governing Body from 7 June 2017<sup>1</sup> record that only the Headmaster “*expressed reservations regarding promises made by Cllr Wells but which had not been delivered*”, please could the Chairman investigate under the Education Act 2005 section 51 (or other available powers) and comment on:
  - i) whether the alleged “promises” have anything to do with the skills required by Regulation for Governor nominees;
  - ii) the fact that the only “reservations” were expressed by the Headmaster – and what might this say about who is running the GB;
  - iii) what these alleged “promises” were and, if there is any foundation to this remark, why they “had not been delivered”;
  - iv) what skills St Olave’s has said that it requires of Governors;
  - v) when the document setting out the required skills was first seen and approved by the GB and, since that date, which new Governors have been required to meet the stated skills, how they were assessed and by whom;

and comment on whether the responses to some or all of these questions support calls for an investigation into governance at St Olave’s under the Education Inspections Act 2006 s60, ss63-65 or other available powers.

Nomination of Cllr Stephen Wells

The Chairman introduced the previously circulated CV for Cllr Stephen Wells who had been nominated to the governing body by the London Borough of Bromley.

The Headmaster explained that he had met Cllr wells on a number of occasions in his capacity as the education portfolio holder for Bromley. He expressed some reservations regarding promises that had been made by Cllr Wells but which had not been delivered.

After some discussion, governors agreed that Cllr Wells did not appear to have the qualities required for appointment to the governing body and declined to accept his nomination.

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

*The Local Authority will be nominating a person as a Local Authority Governor to St Olave's and this is in the gift of the Portfolio Holder.*

**Supplementary question:**

*Given that St Olave's is the only locally maintained secondary school in the Borough, and given that there is lots of supporting legislation (as already mentioned), would the Chairman not agree that this presents an admirable opportunity for the Local Authority to intervene on behalf of the 1100-odd students and staff whose mental health is jeopardised daily by the machinations of one headmaster?*

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

**Oral Questions to the Chairman of Education, Children and Families Select Committee received from Mr Tony Wright-Jones**

1) With :

- Clear evidence of the Head master's interference with the Election of a New Chair (correspondence that has been shared with Bromley previously 2015)
- The continual rejection (By the Head master) of an LEA Governor (Two years).
- Interference of the PA by the Head Master and the Extension of Terms of office of existing Governors contrary to regulations.
- The recent revelation that companies have been set up without LEA permission or notification.

Will the Committee recommend a Full enquiry and an IEB, using the powers available below or any other powers available to the council:

*Education Act 2005 s.51*

*Education Inspections Act 2006, s60, s63-66*

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

**Supplementary question:**

*Having known of serious issues at the school for years, why has the Local Authority not acted?*

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

2) St Olave's extending Terms of Office (T of O) of Governors contrary to Regulation

Noting:

- i) that Statutory Guidance dated March 2015 states at para. 30:
- ii) "Governors remaining within the new structure in their current category will continue to serve out their term of office."
- iii) that in early 2015 a number of Governors had T of O expiring in early 2017
- iv) that some current Governors appear to have stayed on the GB beyond those reported expiry dates,

Please can the Chairman arrange an investigation into;

- a) in respect of Parent Governors, when elections were held
- b) in respect of other Governors, notification of extension
- c) whether a "skills audit" for new Governors has been done and if so what criteria were used, when and by whom
- d) in respect of T of O generally, whether any Regulations on aggregate Term limits apply

And if any breaches of Regulations have been found consider further investigation under;

*Education Act 2005 s.51*

*Education Inspections Act 2006, s60, s63-66*

or any other powers available to the Council

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

**Supplementary question:**

*What is to stop St Olave's from continuing to reject the Local Authority's nominees for Local Authority Governor if the Local Authority won't take action?*

**Reply:**

*St Olave's has been requested to provide the reasons, on proper legal grounds, why the Local Authority Governor nominee has been rejected. No answer has been provided as yet, and the Local Authority is proposing to make a further nomination for Local Authority Governor to St Olave's.*

**Oral Question to the Chairman of Education, Children and Families Select Committee received from Ms Rhonda Galpeer**

- 1) What does the Chairman consider about the practises used by the senior leadership team to deal with more challenging student issues and what impact do you consider it might have?
  - i) SLT not investigating the mitigating circumstances when students don't achieve the grades they are capable of, or show an interest as to why those were the grades of the student.
  - ii) Not providing specialist help form students with SENDS requirements.
  - iii) Immediately suspending students when a serious mental health struggle comes to light, and offering no support.
  - iv) Using negative messaging with students who get grades below a B it might be even just be one C, told they are failing, they are in the lowest cohort, they should feel fortunate to be at the school.

**Reply:**

*I refer to my answer to Mr Grainger's first question.*

**Supplementary question:**

*Bearing in mind the exceptionally high entry requirements to St Olave's, when will the Local Authority consider it appropriate to intervene?*

**Reply:**

*Admissions requirements are a matter for the school and not the Local Authority.*